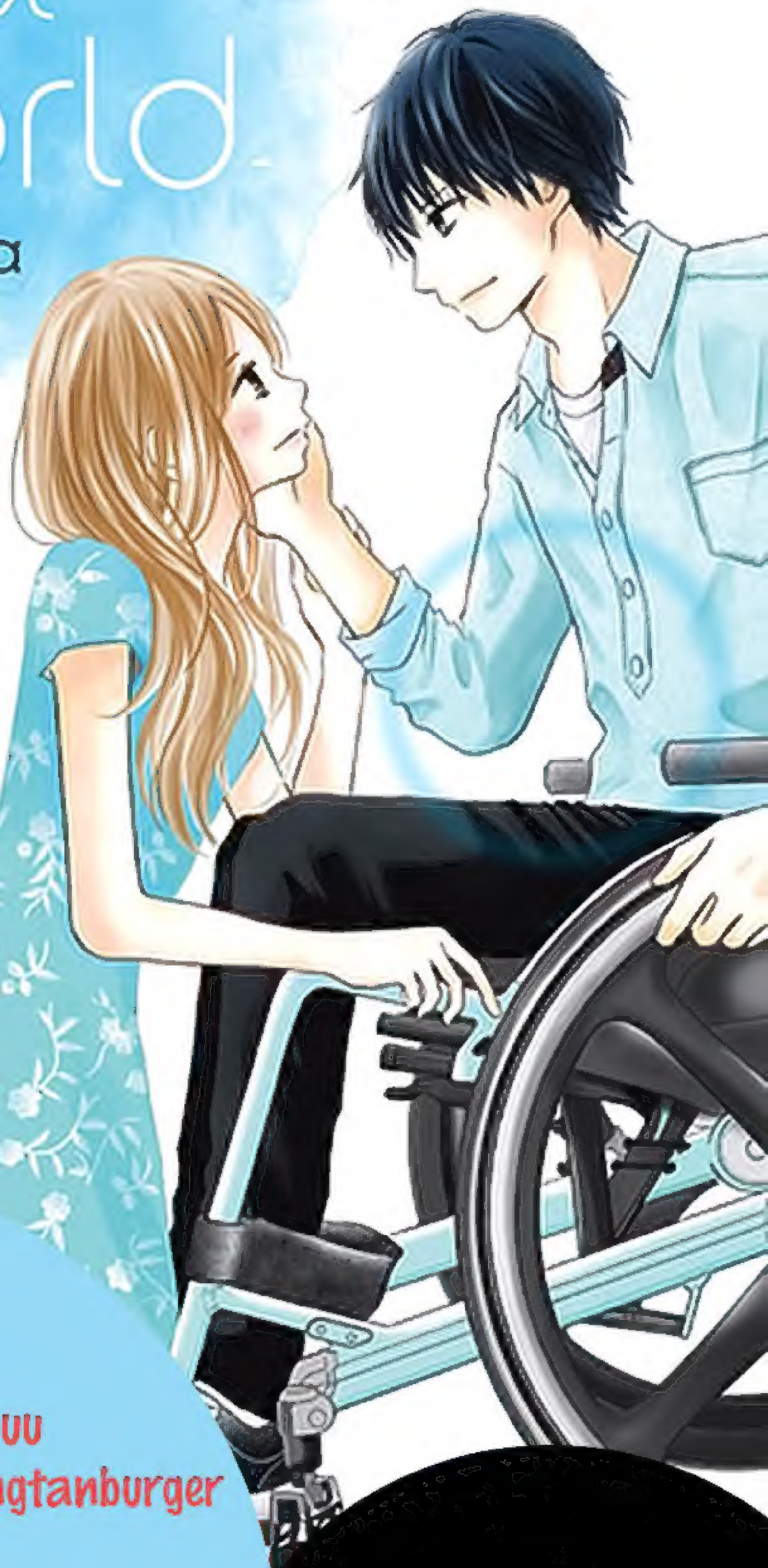
Perfect World

Rie Aruga



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ch.6

A love no one understands

I can feel

his pain topple the mountain while moving in.

"I REALLY WANT TO STAND AGAIN--"

WHAT MUST I DO TO RESCUE HIM FROM THIS ENDLESS CYCLE OF PAIN?

TIGHTLY EMBRACING HIM AND FEELING HIS SUFFERING---

WHAT MUST I DO--?

IS ALL I CAN DO.

!

ISHIBANA-SAN TOO?

"DREAMT THAT HE COULD WALK AGAIN..."

THE ONE IN MY HOUSE USED TO DREAM UP SIMILAR SCENARIOS.

...SO THEY HAVE TO UNWILLINGLY CONTINUE TO SUFFER...

--THAT'S RIGHT.

BUT EVEN IF THAT'S THE CASE,

THEY HAVE THIS PAIN BECAUSE THE HOPE THEY HAVE TO CONTINUE LIVING IS TOO STRONG.

BUT THIS ISN'T SOMETHING WE CAN SOLVE.

I HEARD THAT AS A PERSON GETS OLDER, THE DESIRE TO WALK AGAIN DIMINISHES.

ALL WE CAN DO IS TO TRY OUR BEST TO UNDERSTAND THEM.

DON'T FORCE TOO MUCH OF A BURDEN ON YOURSELF.

YOU MUST TRY TO LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE.

I THINK THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO WILL IMPROVE——

BUT IF BOTH SIDES CAN SHOW THEIR GRATITUDE TOWARDS EACH OTHER,

...THANK YOU SO MUCH.

I'LL DO MY BEST...

BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU WILL ALSO WORRY WHETHER YOU CAN BECOME HIS SUPPORT PILLAR.

BOTH SIDES HAVE THEIR OWN INSECURITIES.

AS A DISABLED PERSON, HE WILL WORRY WHETHER HE CAN BRING HIS LOVED ONE HAPPINESS.

Two days later, Ayukawa and I began our trip back to our hometown.

NEVER THOUGHT THAT WE WOULD START DATING.

THAT WE'RE GOING HOME TO-GETHER.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME SINCE SUMMER

HE'S STILL THE SAME, SITTING ON A WHEEL-CHAIR,

BUT MY FEELINGS ARE DIFF-ERENT...

THINKING BACK, EVEN THOUGH WE TALKED NORMALLY,

I WAS SO NERVOUS.

I'M SORRY FOR MAKING YOU WORRY,

IT'S ALRIGHT NOW.

AYUKAWA,

ARE YOU STILL HAVING THOSE DREAMS?

EVEN THOUGH I KNOW WE WILL MEET ALL SORTS OF OBSTACLES,

IF WE FACE THEM TOGETHER, WE CAN GET RID OF THOSE OBSTACLES

THERE ARE STILL MANY THINGS I DO NOT UNDERSTAND ABOUT YOU.

FROM NOW ON, IF THERE'S ANYTHING, DON'T KEEP IT IN.

I'M VERY HAPPY

THAT YOU TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED.

...I SEE.

I REALLY AM VERY FORTUNATE.

I'M VERY GRATEFUL TO HAVE SOMEONE LIKE YOU ACCOMPANYING ME THROUGH THIS PAIN...

THANK YOU.

Is that so?

??

IT FEELS LIKE IF WE'RE TOGETHER, WE'RE IN-VINCIBLE!

In high spirits!!

SUCH I NICE FEELING!!

DIDN'T THINK SHE WOULD BE SO YOUNG...

EH--...

.....

WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS SHE?

HOW OLD IS SHE?

THE CARETAKER IS A WOMAN, RIGHT?

THAT'S GREAT, SOUNDS LIKE A NICE PERSON.

LET ME THINK...

PROBABLY AROUND FIVE YEARS OLDER?

From looks...

I HAND-ED HIM OVER TO THE CARE-TAKER.

OH, WHAT ABOUT KENZO?

THE CARE-TAKER ALSO LIKES CATS AND IS FINE WITH HELP-ING ME TAKE CARE OF HIM FOR A WHILE.

EH ---

SHE WAS ORIGINALLY A NURSE AT THE REHABILITA-TION CENTER.

EVER SINCE I STARTED MY REHABILITATION EXERCISES, I'VE HAD MANY CHANCES TO SEE HER.

SHE ALWAYS ENCOURAGED ME TO STAY STRONG AND WOULD ALWAYS TAKE CARE OF ME AFTER.

SHE IS MY BENEFACTOR.

...SO

SO A NURSE LIKE THAT ACTUALLY EXISTS...

THIS GIRL

REALLY HAS HER FEELINGS WRITTEN ALL OVER HER FACE.

Phew...

...SHE'S

ALREADY MARRIED.

...

CAN I STOP HERE?

YES, MY HOUSE IS JUST OVER THERE...

THANK YOU FOR BRINGING ME HOME.

.....

TSUGUMI?

THEN I'LL SEE YOU ON NEW YEARS.

YEAH, I'LL CALL YOU THEN.

GRANDPA, TSUGUMI ONEE-SAN IS BACK!

UMM,

THIS IS AYUKAWA-SAN.

HE DROPPED ME HOME.

WELCOME BACK...

I'M BACK.

AH, DAD.

!

...I FEEL SLIGHTLY NERVOUS ...

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IN TSUGUMI-SAN'S CARE.

AH— NO,NO.

IT IS MY DAUGHTER WHO HAS BEEN RECEIVING YOUR CARE.

HOW DO YOU DO, SIR?

I'M AYUKAWA.

YES.

WE WERE HIGH SCHOOL CLASSMATES.

I SEE.

DID YOU COME BACK FROM TOKYO WITH THAT BOY?

VROOM

THEN I'LL BE LEAVING FIRST.

BYE-BYE, KAWANA.

BYE,

BE CAREFUL ON THE ROAD.

MUM, CAN THE KIDS EAT FIRST?

SURE, IT'S JUST COOKING ON THE STOVE.

TSUGUMI MOVE THE RICE COOKER OVER THERE.

OK~AY!

T/N: OSECHI-RYOURI ARE TRADITIONAL JAPANESE NEW YEAR FOODS.

KANA WANTS TO SIT WITH SISTER TSUGUMI ONEE-SAN—

NO, JUST TEA IS FINE.

DAD, YOU'RE NOT DRINK-ING?

IT'S A LIMITED EDITION OSECHI IN HOTELS!

IS IT NICE?

WAHH, ISN'T THIS THE WESTERN-STYLE OSECHI* FROM TAMAYA?!

KOTA ALSO WANT-

PR NOTE: KIDS ARE SPEAKING IN 3RD PERSON; ONEE-SAN MEANS OLDER SISTER.

T/N: PRETTY CURE IS A MAGICAL GIRL ANIME SERIES; JIBANYAN IS A FIRE YOUKAI/DEMON.

T/N: KOUHAKU IS A YEAR-END SONG FESTIVAL.

WELL, SORRY FOR THAT ...!

MUMMY DRAWS IT TOO UGLY.

ALSO DRAW JIBAN-YAN*

TSUGUMI NEE-SAN, DRAW ME PRETTY CURE*

SURE, SURE.

ke ke

QUICKLY, EAT MORE.

HOW AM I SKINNY?

YOU'VE GOTTEN SKINNY.

TSUGUMI, ARE YOU EATING WELL?

OH, KOUHAKU* IS START-ING SOON.

Lively

Lively

ABOUT THA--

YOU'RE 27 THIS YEAR, RIGHT?

DO YOU HAVE A BOY-FRIEND?

YOU DO!

TSUGUMI -CHAN WILL BE A GOOD MOTHER IN THE FUTURE.

EH?

YOU EVEN CAME BACK WITH HIM YESTERDAY

RIGHT, GRANDPA?

I ALSO WANT TO MEET TSU-GUMI'S BOY-FRIEND!

IT'S ALREADY THE END OF THE YEAR SO I THOUGHT I'LL BRING HIM NEXT TIME FOR AN INTRODUCTION...

YOU SHOULD BRING HIM HOME AS WELL!!

EH~~ ?!

-YES, HE'S MY BOYFRIEND.

Should I tell them the truth now...?

AND ONE MORE THING,

HE IS DISABLED.

YOU SAID BEFORE THAT YOU TWO WERE CLASS-MATES,

WHAT IS HE WORK-ING AS NOW?

HE'S AN ARCHITECT IN TOKYO.

WAHH

EH—— THAT'S PRETTY TALENTED

DIS-ABLED?

.....

HE HAD A CAR ACCIDENT RESULTING IN THE INJURY OF HIS SPINAL CORD SO HE HAS TO SIT ON A WHEEL-CHAIR.

EVEN THOUGH HE CAN'T WALK,

THERE ARE NO ISSUES WITH HIS DAILY LIFE, AND HE IS SKILLED AT HIS JOB.

HE'S VERY STRONG, IN-DEPENDENT AND GENTLE TO OTHERS.

I RESPECT HIM FROM THE BOT-TOM OF MY HEART.

CAN HIS SPINAL CORD INJURY BE CURED?

WHEN CAN HE STAND AND WALK AGAIN?

Nervous

Nervous

AH THAT...

THERE IS NO CURE FOR HIS CONDITION.

DAD

DAD...

Nervous

BUT, I THINK ...

TSUGUMI.

NOT EVER.

HE CAN'T WALK AGAIN.

IS THAT SOMETHING YOU CAN SAY TO YOUR PARENTS WHILE SMILING?

PR NOTE: HE CALLS HIS WIFE "KAA-SAN" MEANING MOTHER -- AS IN SHE IS THE MOTHER OF HIS CHILDREN.

DAD, THAT--

DAD ...

BANG

AH, OKAY.

I'M GOING TO TAKE A SHOWER.

KAA-SAN,*

AH

Shhaaa...

NOW WHAT TO DO...?

TSUGUMI,

JUST CLEAR THAT SIDE.

AH,

OKAY...

SUDDENLY SAYING SUCH THINGS WOULD OF COURSE GIVE YOU GUYS A FRIGHT ...

... SORRY,

SCRUB SCRUB

YOU REALLY GAVE US A FRIGHT JUST NOW.

BUT WHEN YOU MEET HIM,

AND TALK TO HIM, YOU WILL GET WHAT I MEAN.

---CRAP...

NOW WAS NOT THE TIME TO SAY IT ALL OUT.

I WAS TOO EAGER ---

I SHOULD HAVE WAIT-ED A LITTLE LONGER BEFORE TELLING THEM ---

I FEEL THAT AS LONG AS YOU ALL MEET HIM AND UNDER-STAND HIM, IT WILL BE ALRIGHT...

WHEN I FIRST MET HIM, I WAS ALSO CONFLICTED,

BUT NOT TOO LONG AFTER, HIS INNER STREN-GTH MADE ME RESPECT HIM...

HE WENT TO THE MARKET EARLY IN THE MORNING TO GET IT.

SCRUB SCRUB

TAMAYA OECHI

WAS SPECIALLY ORDERED BY YOUR DAD FOR YOUR ARRIVAL.

THAT ...

HE ALSO DOESN'T DRINK MUCH BEER ANYMORE AND WALKS AROUND ALL DAY TO EXERCISE HIS BODY.

HE SAYS IT'S BECAUSE HE DOESN'T WANT TO BE A BURDEN ON ME OR YOUR UNCLE.

SINCE LAST YEAR, YOUR FATHER'S BODY HAS NOT BEEN WELL

AND CAN'T DO MANUAL LABOUR.

FOR SOMEONE WHO CAN'T WALK,

EVERYDAY LIFE WILL BE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT.

AS HUMANS, EVEN IF OUR BODIES ARE HEALTHY,

AS WE GET OLDER, THERE WILL MANY DIFFERENT ISSUES POPPING UP, EVEN IN DAILY LIFE.

BUT YOU MIGHT THINK THERE ARE NO PROBLEMS RIGHT NOW,

YET THIS ROAD WILL ONLY GET HARDER FROM NOW ON...

I ALSO THINK THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN A PARTNER IS HIS INNER SELF

close

TSUGUMI,

...THAT,

I'M NOT SURE YET.

BUT HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT MARRIAGE?

I ALSO HAVE TO THINK OF HIS THOUGHTS.

THAT IS

LATER ON, DOWN THE TRACK.

WE SAY LATER,

.....

I...

CAN THAT PERSON

HAVE CHIDREN WITH YOU?

BUT?

BUT...

I...THINK

SO...

BUT PLEASE GIVE ME A LITTLE MORE TIME.

I'M SORRY TO HAVE WORRIED YOU ALL.

I'M NOT ASKING YOU ALL TO IMMEDIATELY ACCEPT OUR RELATIONSHIP...

...MUM

CAN WE NOT TALK ABOUT THIS TODAY?

DAD DIDN'T UTTER A WORD TO ME...

UNTIL THE DAY I RETURNED TO TOKYO,

FROM THAT NIGHT ON,

noisy

noisy

noisy

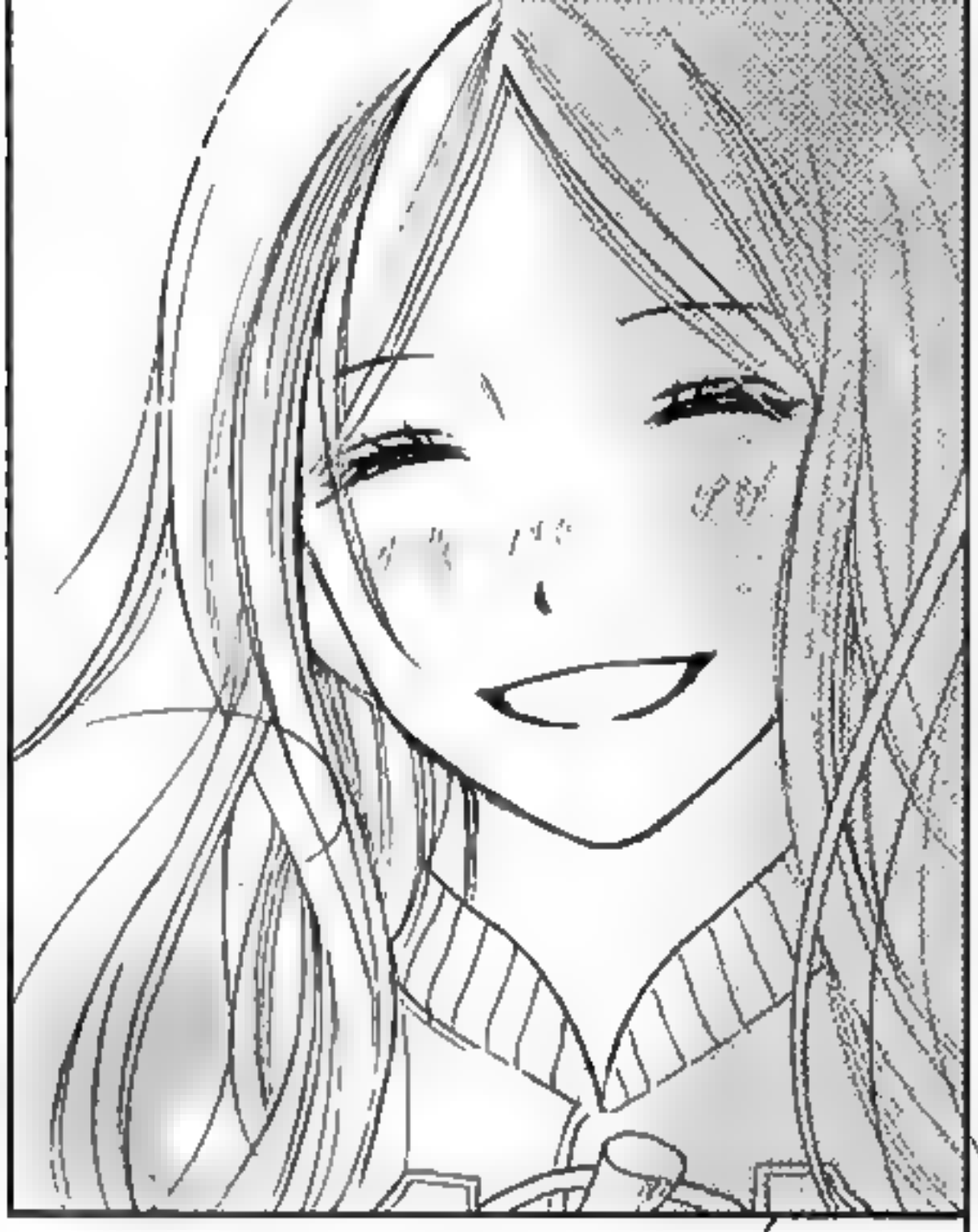
SO QUICKLY AND YOU'RE LEAVING AGAIN.

BECAUSE THERE'S A CAT AT HOME SO THERE'S NO CHOICE.

VERY! AUNTY'S COMPLEXION LOOKS GREAT TOO!

TSUGUMI-CHAN!! HAVE YOU BEEN WELL——?

THERE'S A CAT AT HOME SO NO CHOICE.



NO,

I'M THE ONE...

AHH, SO YOU'RE ITSUKI'S GIRLFRIEND.

THANK YOU FOR ALWAYS TAKING CARE OF ITSUKI.

DEAR, THIS CHILD IS ITSUKI'S CURRENT GIRLFRIEND.

HM? YEAH...

YOUR DAD?

.....

COMPARED TO THE PHOTO FROM EARLIER...

I'LL PAY MY RESPECTS HERE.

ITSUKI, ARE YOU GOING TO THE MAIN HALL?

——Eh?

too many people there...

THEN I'LL GO REQUEST A PROTECTIVE CHARM.

MY FATHER PASSED AWAY WHEN I WAS IN 6TH GRADE.

THAT MAN JUST NOW IS MY STEP-FATHER.

IT SEEMS I HAVEN'T TOLD YOU YET...

SO THAT'S HOW IT IS...

.....

noisy

noisy

noisy

IT SEEMS WE STILL HAVE THINGS WE HAVEN'T TOLD EACH OTHER.

HMM, I SEE...

IT'S OKAY, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

BUT GENERALLY SPEAKING, HE WILL STILL CARE.

I DID NOT GET OUT OF THE CAR...

..ABOUT YESTERDAY,

WAS YOUR FATHER ANGRY?

DID YOU TELL YOUR PARENTS?

ABOUT US?

YES,

I SAID IT STRAIGHT OUT.

NEXT TIME

I MUST PAY MY RESPECTS

NEXT TIME WHEN I MEET THEM AGAIN,

AND PROPERLY GREET THEM.

HE ALSO KNOWS MY INNER IN-SECURITY.

HE KNOWS MY FAMILY'S DOUBTS AND MISUNDER-STANDINGS.

HE CAN SEE IT ALL.

AYUKAWA, HE KNOWS EVERYTHING...

don't crash!

so fast!

EH?

WAIT, BE CAREFUL.

I'LL PUSH!

...AYU-KAWA.

LET'S GO PAY OUR RESPECTS.

HE'S TRYING TO THINK OF ME AND HELP ME CARRY ALL THE INSECURITIES AND TROUBLES

IN THE FOLL-
OWING YEAR

GOD ABOVE,
PLEASE BLESS
US

TO BE SAFE
AND FULL OF
HAPPINESS.

I BEG OF
YOU...

HAHAHA,

IT REALLY IS YOU, KAWANA!

noisy

noisy

MUM, THEY'RE NOT HERE.

THEY PROBABLY WENT TO ANOTHER PLACE.

WAH--?!

push

!?

SEEING YOUR FEEBLE WAY OF WALKING, I KNEW IT WAS YOU!

KOREEDA!?

THAT SCRAWNY GUY!?

KOREEDA!!

IT'S ME, IT'S ME!!

SEEING YOUR EXPRESSION... DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE FORGOTTEN?

EH...EH?

steady

IT'S CALLED CRANBERRIES.

YOU'RE WORKING AT A TOKYO DESIGN COMPANY NOW RIGHT?

AH, I KNOW THAT PLACE.

WHAT'S THE COMPANY NAME?

YOU'RE PRETTY TALENTED.

BECAUSE I EVOLVED.

...WHY ARE YOU SO TALL NOW?

NOT ONLY HAVE I GOTTEN TALLER, BUT ALSO MORE HANDSOME.

You had such a small physique before...

AYUKAWA, DO YOU KNOW HIM?

HE'S KOREEDA KUN FROM CLASS 3.

YEAH, I KNOW HIM,

THOUGH WE'VE NEVER TALKED.

AH——..

AYUKAWA FROM THE BASKETBALL CLUB!

IT'S OUR FIRST TIME TALKING.

ha ha

YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT.

EH,

I SEE...

THE TWO OF US ARE

CURRENTLY DATING.

MY PARENTS ARE STILL WAITING SO I'LL SAY FAREWELL.

AH, OKAY

noisy

noisy

hen

I COULD SEE YOU WERE A LITTLE AWKWARD

BECAUSE HE ALWAYS TEASED ME.

EVEN THOUGH HE'S NOT BAD, BUT I COULDN'T HANDLE HIM IN THE PAST.

...DIDN'T THINK I WOULD MEET HIM HERE.

LET'S MEET THERE NEXT TIME—

I'M NOW WORKING AS AN ENGINEER IN TOKYO.

SURE.

EH

AS IT WAS WRITTEN ALL OVER YOUR FACE.

OKAY,

THAT...

we're going—

KOREEDA,

WHAT IS IT?

noisy

noisy

KAWANA?

I JUST MET KAWANA...

COULD IT BE THE KAWANA YOU LIKED FROM BEFORE?

YEAH.

BIRDS THAT WAKE UP EARLY GET THE WORMS.

NOPE.

YOU'RE NOT TIRED?

THERE ARE NOT MANY CARS.

FEELS LIKE IT'LL BE A SMOOTH RIDE.

IF YOU WANT TO SLEEP, SLEEP.

ONCE WE'RE THERE, I'LL WAKE YOU.

THE CLOSER WE GET TO TOKYO THE MORE THE INSECURITIES IN MY HEART FLARE.

NO, IT'S ALRIGHT

I'M NOT GOING TO SLEEP.

THE ISSUES WE HAVE SOLVED...

THE OBSTACLES IN FRONT OF US, OUTNUMBER

WILL I BE ABLE TO TALK PROPERLY WITH MY DAD NEXT TIME ?

THE NEXT TIME WE RETURN TO OUR HOME-TOWN, WILL I STILL BE ABLE TO SMILE LIKE THIS?

THE CARE-TAKER.

WHO?

YO, KENZO

YOU'RE BACK!

MEOW

MEOW

creak

creak

clack

106

EH?

WHAT IS IT?

THERE ARE NO LETTERS FOR ME.

NAGASAWA-SAN SHOULD HAVE BEEN BY ALREADY.

YOU'RE QUITE EARLY.

HOW DO YOU DO? I'M KAWANA.

HOW--

KAWANA,

NAGASAWA-SAN IS THE ONE THAT HAS BEEN TAKING CARE OF ME ALL ALONG.

IT'S FINE.

I NEED TO THANK YOU FOR TAKING CARE OF MY CAT.

SORRY FOR ENTERING YOUR HOME WITHOUT PERMISSION.

NAGASAWA-SAN,

SHE IS THE ONE I MENTIONED TO YOU BEFORE-- MY GIRLFRIEND.

This

This person is really pretty...

even her figure is great...

AH, ITSUKI-KUN,

THIS IS FOR YOU.

smile

HELLO,

I AM THE CARETAKER, NAGASAWA.

AH,

THANK YOU.

Her hand-writing is really nice.

HAPPY NEW YEAR.

AH, OKAY.

HELLO.

AYUKAWA? IT'S ME.

SORRY, EVEN THOUGH IT'S NEW YEARS.

I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE SEISMIC RETRO-FITTING FOR ASAHI BUILDING.

Excuse me a moment

DID SHE SPECIALLY COME OVER TO GIVE THE CARD...

ring

Click

HE SAID CLEARLY BEFORE FROM NOW ON HE WOULD NOT GET A GIRLFRIEND.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU TWO BEEN DATING?

ALMOST A MONTH.

I SEE.

I HEARD YOU TWO USED TO BE CLASSMATES.

YES.

AFTER ALL, I

PLEASE ASK ME.

IF THERE'S ANY-THING ABO-UT ITSUKI-KUN

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND,

IN HIS MOST VULNERABLE STATE, I WAS BY HIS SIDE.

ACCOMPANIED HIM THROUGH THE MOST PAINFUL AND TORTUROUS PERIOD.

I CAN STILL REMEMBER THE LOOK ON HIS FACE... LIKE HE WAS ABOUT TO COLLAPSE AND DIE THE NEXT SECOND.

AS LONG AS IT'S ABOUT HIM, I UNDERSTAND A LOT MORE THAN YOU, HIS NOT-EVEN-A-MONTH GIRLFRIEND.

WHETHER IT'S HIS INNER THOUGHTS OR HIS BODY CONDITION,

PR/TS NOTE: AAAANNDD/ *DRUM ROLLS* ENTER/ NEW CHARACTER/ BITCH-SAN.

What is with her?

.....

This person...